



FURROWS

NEWSLETTER

RURAL MINISTRY PROJECT
NO. 5 — JULY 1992

Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of Victoria



RURAL YOUTH HOMELESS PROJECT

A key area of human need resulting from the current recession in rural Australia is that of young homeless people. A generation of youthful Australians is at risk.

"The dreadful waste, distress and sadness which occurs when young people from the country leave home with no support or resources to enable them to stay in their local community, and then are forced to the unfamiliar circumstances and culture of the city streets, is of great concern," says the Rev. John Hill, director of the Rural Ministry Project. (Uniting Church Synod of Victoria).

He says: "This situation is an urgent and challenging one of national dimensions. Local communities are drastically under resourced. Yet, it is precisely in these places where information, resources and support is required."

The Burdekin Report has shown the need to develop a community based response to this matter. Youth accommodation centres, or 'refuges' are costly, and are often inappropriate in terms of assisting young people to a new start.

The Myer Foundation, which has established a tradition for the provision of sensitive and innovative community based programs, is taking the initiative with the Rural Ministry Project of the Uniting Church, Synod of Victoria, funding the Rural Youth Homeless Project with a two year grant.

The Project will employ a community development officer to work with rural communities:

- to identify church and community groups already involved in working on homelessness, and to facilitate provision and sharing of information and resources;

- to work with selected churches and communities to develop accommodation initiatives for homeless young people which are appropriate to their local area;

- to provide information to other church and community groups, using FURROWS newsletter Australia-wide.

John Hill says: "The Project aims to prevent rural homeless young people from becoming 'street kids' in the city, by bringing together churches and communities to work on preventative local programmes with individuals and families."

The Project will be managed as a community service of the Uniting Church under the auspices of the Commission for Mission, with a steering committee having representatives from government, church and community care agencies.

Information concerning the progress of the Project will be provided through the quarterly FURROWS magazine, or contact John Hill, Rural Ministry Project, Uniting Church Centre, 130 Little Collins Street, Melbourne 3000. Phone: (008) 136 747.

In This Issue:

Furrows newsletter brings news and stories about rural people, communities and churches across Australia.

The Rural Ministry Project aims to provide information and to offer resources, convinced that relevant knowledge empowers people.

Articles in this issue deal with:

- page 1. Rural Youth Homeless Project
- page 2. Letters to the Editor
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Review: Prairie Journal
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NEIL TOLLIDAY, Editor

JOHN HILL, Director: Rural Ministry Project

You may wish to support the Rural Ministry Project and FURROWS by an earmarked donation through the SHARE Community Appeal (tax deductible) c/o this office. FURROWS is distributed to Churches and community workers across Australia. Please contact this office for additional copies and to be placed on the mailing list.

LETTERS



Dear Editor,

In Furrows (no. 4/March 1992) John Hill argued that urban decisions affecting rural people should be based on a wholistic approach. Quite validly, Hill asked about the balancing of social and economic criteria — while conceding the right of a company to maximise profits.

Hill misses the point, however, in hoping that building a better future for rural Australia will be based on the better decisions of big business and government.

The U.S.A experience is that the revival and renewal of rural America depends on co-operatives and independent commercial enterprises. There are, for example, 1000 electric co-operatives in the U.S.A. serving 12 million members and a population of 25 million.

These co-operatives are facilitating the development of telephone co-operatives, satellite television and health networks. Since 1961 they have sponsored 25,500 projects — generating approximately one million jobs.

Building a better future for rural Australia depends on locally owned and controlled enterprises whose purpose is maximising social benefits through profitability.

Yours sincerely,
David Griffiths.
Frankston, Victoria

John Hill replies:

"I have commenced a Study Program involving rural development centres in the U.S.

My conviction is that economic development and social fulfilment are linked in the community and the U.S. experience is that the most lasting change has come when the community itself identifies its own needs and strengths and takes action.

My article sought to draw attention to the responsibility of those who act irresponsibly and whose decisions do not take account of the effects on people.

As the above comment makes clear, I am in agreement with the thrust of David Griffiths argument.

Editor, FURROWS

Thank you for your very informative March Issue of FURROWS — well done.

It struck me that your readers might be interested in the paper "Sustainable Land Use — What can a Christian land ethic contribute?" which I presented to the Australasian Rural Ministry Conference, in Waipawa, New Zealand in April of this year.

Copies are available from me at the **Land Use Study Centre**, University College of Southern Queensland, P.O. Darling Heights, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350, Telephone: (076) 312 100

Brian Roberts

EDITOR'S COMMENT

Dr Roberts, one of the founding fathers of Australia's Landcare movement, has written a paper of interest to people who want to increase their awareness of the issues concerned with restoring the planet Earth.

He points to the evidence of "a looming catastrophe if humans do not modify both their consumerism (and resultant pollution) and their population growth rate."

He calls for a fundamental shift in our respect for life on earth if humans are to survive on this planet. He suggests that we should reinstate Lowdermilk's Eleventh Commandment: "Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation."

Roberts discusses the emergence of environmentalism as a new religion, with its condemnation for the heretics who question the Green gospel. He wants us to keep our sense of perspective, so that faith does not outstrip reason.

He stands by his view that the church has emphasised God/man relationships at the expense of man/creation relations. Roberts discusses the difficulty experienced by some biblical interpreters in ascribing sacredness to the natural world.

"We need to move from a religion of economics to a religion of natural interdependence which respects the creation as the basis for our being." I agree with Brian Roberts that church people can contribute by encouraging ecologically aware biblical study.

FURROWS WELCOMES FEEDBACK

FURROWS provides a forum for issues related to the Australian rural situation and the Church's response.

Address all letters to:

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